

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A planning engine for use in a planning system for planning the shipment of one or more items, ~~a parcel of at least one item, the planning including routing and rating the shipment, the planning system including a router for determining possible routes for the shipment, a rater for rating each possible route, a consolidator for attempting to consolidate a list of shipments, and a prorater for allocating costs of a consolidation among the consolidated shipments, the planning system also having read and write access to a shipping database, the planning engine comprising:~~

a) an input module, responsive to a planning request for indicating at least one shipment of the one or more items for which planning is to be performed, ~~the planning request being provided in one of at least two forms, the input module for providing a list including each shipment for which planning is to be performed;~~

b) a load list template builder, responsive to the list including each shipment for which planning is to be performed, for providing a direct load list template including each item in each shipment ~~indicating at least one load, each load having an associated stop, each stop having an associated shipment, each shipment having at least one associated item;~~

a consolidation module for determining possible consolidations of shipments and providing a consolidated load list template indicating possible consolidations of shipments;

a router module, responsive to the direct load list template and consolidation load list template, for determining possible routes for each shipment of the direct load list template and consolidation of shipments of the consolidated load list template and providing the determined possible routes to the direct load list template and consolidated load list template, the router module using business rules to determine each possible route and prioritizing the business rules in case of conflict;

a rater module for determining rates for each possible route for each shipment and consolidation of shipments and providing the determined rates for each possible route to the direct load list template and consolidated load list template;

a prorater module for determining an apportionment of costs of the determined rates for a consolidation of shipments among the items included in the consolidated shipments;

e) an analyzer, responsive to the direct load list template, consolidated load list template, and prorater module, for selecting one of the direct load list template and consolidated load list template based on prorated costs for each shipment included in the consolidated shipments and planning in turn how to ship each of the shipments indicated by the load list template by making use of the router and the rater, for providing a load list based on the selected one of the direct load list template and consolidated load list template indicating a carrier and service for each shipment of the load list template or consolidated load list template; and

d) an output module, responsive to the load list, for outputting providing the load list indicating a carrier and service for each shipment of the load list template or consolidated load list template. in a manner corresponding to the form of the planning request information,

~~wherein the planning engine passes the router the load list template and the router then determines possible routes for each load of the load list template, the router referring to business rules and to a means for prioritizing the business rules in case of conflict, the router returning to the planning engine a carrier list indicating acceptable routes in terms of a list of carriers and one or more services for each carrier.~~

2. (Original) A planning engine as in claim 1, wherein the planning engine is implemented as a component object module (COM) server.

3-9. Cancelled.